



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



2349 f. 58.8

Bound

MAR 1

**Harvard College Library**



FROM THE  
**KENNETH MATHESON TAYLOR**  
**FUND**

GIVEN IN 1899 BY  
**JESSIE TAYLOR PHILIPS**

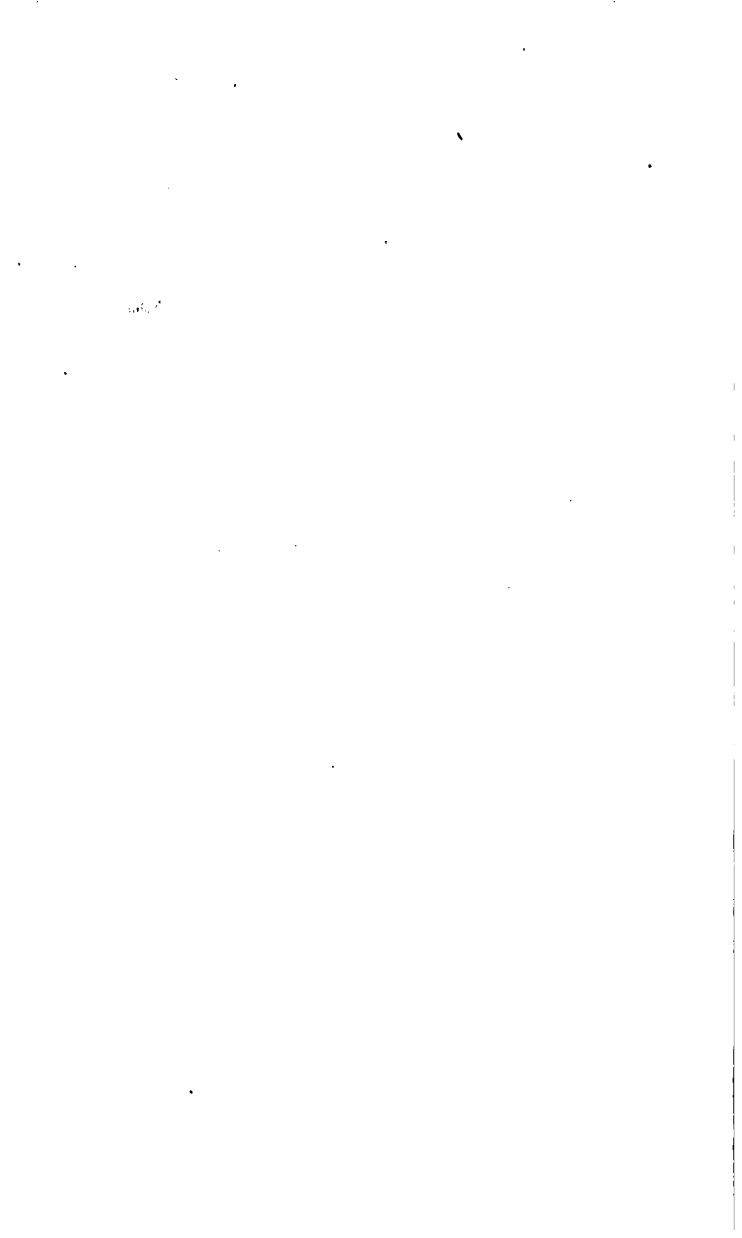
IN MEMORY OF HER BROTHER  
**KENNETH MATHESON TAYLOR**  
(Class of 1890)

FOR ENGLISH LITERATURE









THE LAST BALLAD  
AND OTHER POEMS



*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

UNIFORM WITH THIS :

BALLADS AND SONGS. 4th edition. \$1.50.

A RANDOM ITINERARY. \$1.50.

Also, small 4to, \$2.50.

PLAYS. An Unhistorical Pastoral; A Romantic Farce;  
Bruce, a Chronicle Play; Smith, a Tragic Farce;  
Scaramouch in Naxos, a Pantomime.

GODFRIDA. A Play.

---

JOHN LANE, *The Bodley Head*, 140 Fifth Avenue,  
NEW YORK.

# THE LAST BALLAD

AND OTHER POEMS



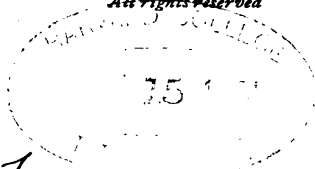
JOHN LANE  
THE BODLEY HEAD  
LONDON & NEW YORK  
1899

23497.58.8

1371  
23

COPYRIGHT, 1898,  
By JOHN LANE

*All rights reserved*



*Taylor fund*

FIRST EDITION.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE LAST BALLAD . . . . .	I
THE ORDEAL . . . . .	24
A BALLAD OF A COWARD . . . . .	85
COMING . . . . .	93
BATTLE . . . . .	95
THE HYMN OF ABDUL HAMID . . . . .	97
WAR-SONG . . . . .	101
THE BADGE OF MEN . . . . .	106
THE UNRESIGNED MOURNER . . . . .	109
THE GIFT . . . . .	110
EARTH TO EARTH . . . . .	111
MY LILY . . . . .	114
PRINCE OF THE FAIRIES . . . . .	116
THE STOOP OF RHENISH . . . . .	118
MATINÉES :—I. . . . .	121
II. . . . .	122

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
HOLIDAY AT HAMPTON COURT . . . . .	124
IN THE ISLE OF DOGS . . . . .	127
AFTERNOON . . . . .	132
INSOMNIA . . . . .	134
THE LAST ROSE . . . . .	136
SUMMER RAIN . . . . .	140
THE PRICE . . . . .	142
THE UNKNOWN . . . . .	144
WAITING . . . . .	146
THE ARISTOCRAT . . . . .	149
THE OUTCAST . . . . .	152
THE PIONEER . . . . .	155
THE HERO . . . . .	158
ECLOGUES :—I. . . . .	160
II. . . . .	165
III. . . . .	168

## THE LAST BALLAD

By coasts where scalding deserts reek,  
The apanages of despair;  
In outland wilds, by firth and creek,  
O'er icy bournes of silver air;

In storm or calm delaying not,  
To every noble task addressed,  
Year after year, Sir Lancelot  
Fulfilled King Arthur's high behest.

He helped the helpless ones; withstood  
Tyrants and sanctioners of vice;  
He rooted out the dragon brood,  
And overthrew false deities.

*THE LAST BALLAD*

Alone with his own soul, alone

With life and death, with day and night,  
His thought and strength grew great and  
shone

A tongue of flame, a sword of light.

And yet not all alone. On high,

When midnight set the spaces free,  
And brimming stars hung from the sky  
Low down, and spilt their jewellery,

Behind the nightly squandered fire,

Through a dark lattice only seen  
By love, a look of rapt desire  
Fell from a vision of the Queen.

From heaven she bent when twilight knit

The dusky air and earth in one;

*THE LAST BALLAD*

He saw her like a goddess sit  
Enthroned upon the noonday sun.

In passages of gulfs and sounds,  
When wild winds dug the sailor's grave,  
When clouds and billows merged their  
bounds,  
And the keel climbed the slippery wave,

A sweet sigh laced the tempest; nay,  
Low at his ear he heard her speak;  
Among the hurtling sheaves of spray  
Her loosened tresses swept his cheek.

And in the revelry of death,  
If human greed of slaughter cast  
Remorse aside, a violet breath,  
The incense of her being passed



*THE LAST BALLAD*

Across his soul, and deeply swayed  
The fount of pity; o'er the strife  
He curbed the lightning of his blade,  
And gave the foe his forfeit life.

Low on the heath, or on the deck,  
In bloody mail or wet with brine,  
Asleep he saw about her neck  
The wreath of gold and rubies shine;

He saw her brows, her loveliest face,  
And on her cheek one passionate tear;  
He felt in dreams the rich embrace,  
The beating heart of Guinevere.

“ Visions that haunt my couch, my path,  
Although the waste, unfathomed sea  
Should rise against me white with wrath  
I must behold her verily,

*THE LAST BALLAD*

“ Once ere I die,” he said, and turned  
Westward his faded silken sails  
From isles where cloudy mountains burned,  
And north to Severn-watered Wales.

Beside the Usk King Arthur kept  
His Easter court, a glittering rout.  
But Lancelot, because there swept  
A passion of despair throughout

His being, when he saw once more  
The sky that canopied, the tide  
That girdled Guinevere, forbore  
His soul’s desire, and wandered wide

In unknown seas companionless,  
Eating his heart, until by chance  
He drifted into Lyonesse,  
The wave-worn kingdom of romance.

*THE LAST BALLAD*

He leapt ashore and watched his barque  
Unmastered stagger to its doom;  
Then doffed his arms and fled bare~~s~~<sup>as?</sup>  
Into the forest's beckoning gloom.

The exceeding anguish of his mind  
Had broken him. "King Arthur's trust,"  
He cried; "ignoble, fateful, blind!  
Her love and my love, noxious lust!

"Dupes of our senses! Let us eat  
In caverns fathoms underground,  
Alone, ashamed! To sit at meat  
In jocund throngs?—the most profound

"Device of life the mountebank,  
Vendor of gilded ashes! Steal  
From every sight to use the rank  
And loathsome needs that men conceal;

*THE LAST BALLAD*

“ And crush and drain in curtained beds  
The clusters called of love; but feed  
With garlanded uplifted heads;  
Invite the powers that sanction greed

“ To countenance the revel; boast  
Of hunger, thirst; be drunken; claim  
Indulgence to the uttermost,  
Replenishing the founts of shame!”

He gathered berries, efts, and snails,  
Sorrel, and new-burst hawthorn leaves;  
Uprooted with his savage nails  
Earth-nuts; and under rocky eaves  
Shamefast devoured them, out of sight  
In darkness, lest the eye of beast,  
Or bird, or star, or thing of night  
Uncouth, unknown, should watch him  
feast.

*THE LAST BALLAD*

At noon in twilight depths of pine  
He heard the word Am<sup>+</sup>mon spoke;  
He saw the pallid, evil sign  
The wred<sup>+</sup>-eld lit upon the oak.

The viper loitered in his way;  
The minx looked up with bloodshot leer;  
Ill-meaning fauns and lamiæ  
With icy laughter flitted near;

But if he came upon a ring  
Of sinless elves, and crept unseen  
Beneath the brake to hear them sing,  
And watch them dancing on the green,

They touched earth with their finger-tips;  
They ceased their roundelay; they laid  
A seal upon their elfin lips  
And vanished in the purple shade.

*THE LAST BALLAD*

At times he rent the dappled flank  
Of some fair creature of the chase,  
Mumbled its flesh, or growling drank  
From the still-beating heart, his face

And jowl ruddled, and in his hair  
And beard, blood-painted straws and  
burs,  
While eagles barked screening the air,  
And wolves that were his pensioners.

Sometimes at night his mournful cry  
Troubled all waking things; the mole  
Dived to his deepest gallery;  
The vixen from the moonlit knoll

Passed like a shadow underground,  
And the mad satyr in his lair

*THE LAST BALLAD*

Whined bodeful at the world-old sound  
Of inarticulate despair.

Sir Lancelot, beloved of men!  
The ancient earth gat hold of him;  
A year was blotted from his ken  
In the enchanted forest dim.

At Easter when the thorn beset  
The bronzing wood with silver sprays,  
And hyacinth and violet  
Empurpled all the russet ways;

When buttercup and daffodil  
A stainless treasure-trove unrolled,  
And cowslips had begun to fill  
Their chalices with sweeter gold,

*THE LAST BALLAD*

He heard a sound of summer rush  
By swarthy grove and kindled lawn;  
He heard, he sighed to hear the thrush  
Singing alone before the dawn.

Forward he stalked with eyes on fire  
Like one who keeps in sound and sight  
An angel with celestial lyre  
Descanting rapturous delight.

He left behind the spell-bound wood;  
He saw the branchless air unfurled;  
He climbed a hill and trembling stood  
Above the prospect of the world.

With lustre in its bosom pent  
From many a shining summer day  
And harvest moon, the wan sea leant  
Against a heaven of iron-grey.



*THE LAST BALLAD*

Inland on the horizon beat  
And flickered, drooping heavily,  
A fervid haze, a vaporous heat,  
The dusky eyelid of the sky.

White ways, white gables, russet thatch  
Fretted the green and purple plain;  
The herd undid his woven latch;  
The bleating flock went forth again;

The skylarks uttered lauds and prime;  
The sheep-bells rang from hill to hill;  
The cuckoo pealed his mellow chime;  
The orient bore a burden shrill.

His memory struggled half awake;  
Dimly he groped within to see

*THE LAST BALLAD*

What star, what sun, what light should  
break

And set his darkened spirit free.

But from without deliverance came:

Afar he saw a horseman speed,

A knight, a spirit clad in flame

Riding upon a milkwhite steed.

For now the sun had quenched outright

The clouds and all their working charms,

Marshalled his legionary light,

And fired the rider's golden arms.

Softly the silver billows flowed;

Beneath the hill the emerald vale

Dipped seaward; on the burnished road

The milkwhite steed, the dazzling mail

*THE LAST BALLAD*

Advanced and flamed against the wind;  
And Lancelot, his body rent  
With the fierce trial of his mind  
To know, reeled down the steep descent.

Remembrances of battle plied  
His soul with ruddy beams of day.  
“ A horse! a lance! to arms!” he cried,  
And stood there weeping in the way.

“ Speak!” said the knight. “ What man  
are you ?”

“ I know not yet. Surely of old  
I rode in arms, and fought and slew  
In jousts and battles manifold.”

Oh, wistfully he drew anear,  
Fingered the reins, the jewelled sheath;

*THE LAST BALLAD*

With rigid hand he grasped the spear,  
And shuddering whispered, "Life and  
death,

"Love, lofty deeds, renown—did these  
Attend me once in days unknown?"

With courtesy, with comely ease,  
And brows that like his armour shone,

The golden knight dismounting took  
Sir Lancelot by the hand and said,  
"Your voice of woe, your lonely look  
As of a dead man whom the dead

"Themselves cast out—whence are they,  
friend?"

Sir Lancelot a moment hung  
In doubt, then knelt and made an end  
Of all his madness, tensely strung

## *THE LAST BALLAD*

In one last effort to be free  
Of evil things that wait for men  
In secret, strangle memory,  
And shut the soul up in their den.

“ Spirit,” he said, “ I know your eyes:  
They bridge with light the heavy drift  
Of years. . . . A woman said, ‘ Arise;  
And if you love the Queen, be swift!’

“ The token was an emerald chased  
In gold, once mine. Wherefore I rode  
At dead of night in proudest haste  
To Payarne where the Queen abode.

“ A crafty witch gave me to drink:  
Almost till undern of the morn  
Silent, in darkness. . . . When I think  
It was not Guinevere, self-scorn

*THE LAST BALLAD*

“ Cuts to the marrow of my bones,  
A blade of fire. Can wisdom yield  
No mood, no counsel, that atones  
For wasted love! . . . Heaven had re-  
vealed

“ That she should bear a child to me  
My bed-mate said. . . . Yet am I mad ?  
The offspring of that treachery!  
The maiden knight! You—Galahad,

“ My son, who make my trespass dear ! ”  
His look released his father's thought—  
The darkling orbs of Guinevere;  
For so had Lancelot's passion wrought.

With tenderer tears than women shed  
Sir Galahad held his father fast.

*THE LAST BALLAD*

“ Now I shall be your squire,” he said.

But Lancelot fought him long. At last

The maiden gently overpowered

The man. Upon his milkwhite steed  
He brought him where a castle towered  
Midmost a green enamelled mead ;

And clothed his body, clothed his heart  
In human garniture once more.

“ My father, bid me now depart.

I hear beside the clanging shore,

“ Above the storm, or in the wind,

Outland, or on the old Roman street,  
A chord of music intertwined  
From wandering tones deep-hued and  
sweet.

*THE LAST BALLAD*

“ Afar or near, at noon, at night,  
The braided sound attends and fills  
My soul with peace, as heaven with light  
O'erflows when morning crowns the hills.

“ And with the music, seen or hid,  
A blood-rose on the palace lawn,  
A fount of crimson, dark amid  
The stains and glories of the dawn ;

“ Above the city's earthly hell  
A token ominous of doom,  
A cup on fire and terrible  
With thunders in its ruddy womb ;

“ But o'er the hamlet's fragrant smoke,  
The dance and song at eventide,  
A beating heart, the gentle yoke  
Of life the bridegroom gives the bride ;



*THE LAST BALLAD*

“ A ruby shadow on the snow ;  
A flower, a lamp—through every veil  
And mutable device I know,  
And follow still the Holy Grail

“ Until God gives me my new name  
Empyrean, and the quest be done.”  
Then like a spirit clad in flame,  
He kissed his father and was gone.

Long gazed Sir Lancelot on the ground  
Tormented till benign repose  
Enveloped him in depths profound  
Of sweet oblivion. When he rose

The bitterest was past. “ And I  
Shall follow now the Holy Grail,  
Seen, or unseen, until I die:  
My very purpose shall avail

*THE LAST BALLAD*

“ My soul,” he said. By day, by night, ^  
He rode abroad, his vizor up;  
With sun and moon his vehement sight  
Fought for a vision of the cup—

In vain. For evermore on high  
When darkness set the spaces free,  
And brimming stars hung from the sky  
Low down, and spilt their jewellery,  
Behind the nightly squandered fire,  
Through a dim lattice only seen  
By love, a look of rapt desire  
Fell from a vision of the Queen.

From heaven she bent when twilight knit  
The dusky air and earth in one;  
He saw her like a goddess sit  
Enthroned upon the noonday sun.

*THE LAST BALLAD*

Wherefore he girt himself again :

    In lawless towns and savage lands,  
He overthrew unrighteous men,  
    Accomplishing the King's commands.

In passages of gulfs and sounds

    When wild winds dug the sailor's grave,  
When clouds and billows merged their  
    bounds,  
    And the keel climbed the slippery wave,

A sweet sigh laced the tempest ; nay,

    Low at his ear he heard her speak ;  
Among the hurtling sheaves of spray  
    Her loosened tresses swept his cheek.

And in the revelry of death,

    If human greed of slaughter cast

*THE LAST BALLAD*

Remorse aside, a violet breath,  
The incense of her being passed

Across his soul, and deeply swayed  
The fount of pity; o'er the strife  
He curbed the lightning of his blade,  
And gave the foe his forfeit life.

His love, in utter woe annealed,  
Escaped the furnace, sweet and clear—  
His love that on the world had sealed  
The look, the soul of Guinevere.

## THE ORDEAL

*Exceedingly tame is the devil, with all his forks and flaming stuff :*

*To be conscious and not omnipotent is more than torture enough.*

BETWEEN the Golden City and the sea  
A damasked meadow lay, the saffron beach  
And silver loops of surge dissevering  
The violet water from the grass-green land.

While yet the morning sun swung low in  
heaven,

A crystal censer in a turquoise dome,  
Emanuel meted justice in the gate,  
Emanuel of the Golden City King.

*THE ORDEAL*

To him there came Sir Hilary; his wife,  
The comely Bertha; after them their sons  
And daughters grieving. Godfrey also came,  
Knight-errant of the Phoenix; from that  
quest

Lately returned : guarded he was and  
bound.

“ Justice, my lord and king ! ” cried Hilary,  
With passion hoarse, and wanner than a  
flame

That flickers in the sun. “ I saw them kiss :  
I saw her from her bosom take a ring  
And place it warm upon his finger. Here ”—  
He gave the King the ring—“ an old worn  
hoop

Of pale alloy, but clasping, doubt it not,  
A horde of sweet and shameful memories

*THE ORDEAL*

More dear to them than mines of virgin  
gold.

Justice, my lord and king!"

" Whom do you charge ? "

" Sir Godfrey and my wife. I saw them kiss ;  
I saw her tearfully assign the ring  
Warm from her bosom to his lustful hand.  
For him the gallows and for her the stake ! "

" But if you saw this done, Sir Hilary,  
Why is her lover here alive to-day ? "

" I ran upon him in the garden-close  
When I espied them ; but he beat me back.  
Hearing the clash of steel my folk rushed  
forth

*THE ORDEAL*

And fettered him. Vengeance miscarrying  
thus,  
Before the world the law shall have its way.  
The age is dissolute; the hearts of men  
Know every sin by rote; their starveling  
souls  
Are blind and lame: I publish my disgrace  
To warn the world. This woman is my  
wife;  
These well-grown youths; these budding  
damsels—look . . .  
I scarce can say the words . . . look  
you, my liege,  
These are our children: treasure, you would  
say,  
To fill a woman's heart? Oh no! He  
there,  
That lecher, is her lover, gray and gaunt.



## THE ORDEAL

If she be burned before her children's eyes,  
The wanton blood they have from her,  
    refined  
By fire, in her fierce torment drained and  
    seared,  
May leave them humble-hearted and afraid  
Even of the lawful kiss of married love.  
Justice, my lord, upon the shameful pair!"

"Do they admit the charge? What do you  
    say,  
Sir Godfrey? Bertha, answer."

    " All my life,"  
The lady said, looking upon the ground:  
Because when she looked up her stricken eyes  
Turned to her children, sorrowing by her  
    side;

## *THE ORDEAL*

And her true heart when most she needed  
strength

Began to break: wherefore upon the ground  
She cast her gaze and answered, " All my  
life

I have been faithful to my husband's  
bed."

" And I," said Godfrey, " never did him  
wrong."

Knight-errant of the Phoenix, fancy-charmed  
At fifty still, but as inept to lie  
As tongueless men to sing, even furtive  
minds

A grudging credence paid him: jealousy  
That calls the moon a leper, and will swear  
There never was a maid of sweet sixteen,

*THE ORDEAL*

Only the heart's attorney, jealousy,  
Had any countenance to doubt his word.

"He lies," cried Hilary, "as their lovers'  
code  
Requires."

"The ring, the keepsake?" said the King:  
"Did you receive it with a kiss from her?"

"I kissed her, and she gave me back the  
ring."

"Oh! she returned the ring!" cried Hilary.  
"A stale, old shame! I might have guessed  
as much.

The happiest of men I judged myself.  
My wife, so delicate, so meek, so chaste,

*THE ORDEAL*

A rare obedience gave; but unperfumed,  
Unlit by passion: so she seemed, and so  
To me she was, because her false blood  
burned

In the dark-lantern of a lawless love.

Where did he hunt the Phoenix? Ask him  
that.

How often has he, wandering secretly,  
Discovered in my arbours, here at home,  
Or on my pillows, Araby the Blest?"

"Nay," said the King; "have patience,  
Hilary.

Let Godfrey plead; she-after him shall tell  
Her own romance. Lead her aside mean-  
while."

"Content," said Hilary.

## THE ORDEAL

And it was done.  
Her children gathered round her as she  
went,  
Worship and sorrow fighting in their looks.  
The youngest, eager to be near her, trod  
Upon her skirt, making her halt. Abashed  
He shrank behind the others; but she  
turned,  
And, seeing him distressed, held out her  
hand,  
Moving her fingers as she used to do  
Winningly when her children first could  
walk.  
She sent him also so humane a smile,  
So sweet, so patient, that his ruddy cheek  
Grew pale as hers; and, suffering more,  
than she,  
Because he hardly knew—and yet he knew—

## THE ORDEAL

The naked meaning of his father's charge,  
He cried aloud, and, throttled by his sobs,  
Sank to the ground: the mounting tide of  
life

Had but begun to press upon his heart  
With murmured news of mystery unveiled;  
And all his fancy innocently clung  
About his mother—he, her latest born;  
And she, his earliest sweetheart.

Silently,

Before another could, she reached her son,  
And lifted him and bore him in her arms.  
Dismayed to find himself a babe again,  
He pushed her from him, straining towards  
the ground.

“Be still!” she said. “This is a thing to do!

## *THE ORDEAL*

Something to do!" and crushed him to  
her breast.

East of the city wall a virgin wood  
Discovered twilight gleams of emerald  
In depths of leafy darkness treasured up.  
Upon its verge a grove of hawthorn hung,  
The friendly tree—and Nature's favourite:  
For now that all its own unhoarded bloom  
Was withered, and its incense sacrificed,  
The honeysuckle lit the matted boughs  
With cressets burning odour, and the briar  
Enwreathed and overhung them lovingly,  
Its pallid rose like elfin faces sweet  
Peering from out the swart-green thicket-  
side.

Thither they led dame Bertha. In the shade  
She sat: her son, still as a nursling now,

## *THE ORDEAL*

With solemn eyes where stately dreams  
reside,

Lay in her arms and watched her ashen lips.

The brilliant blackbirds, sauntering through  
the brake,

Doled out indifferently their golden notes,

Or sprinkled magic phrases, summer showers

Of jewelled rain, the while Sir Godfrey's  
voice

Re-echoed faintly from the City gate.

Then Bertha, all benumbed with misery,

Caressed her son, and, swaying to and fro,

In troubled whispers told a fairy tale

Of how a lady, deeply wronged, became

The happiest princess in the world at last.

Her other children, kneeling by her side,

Powerless to comfort, worshipped her and  
wept.



## THE ORDEAL

Sir Godfrey, standing bound before the King,  
Spoke thus: " My cognizance has wrought  
my fate:

A Phoenix burning in his nest; the scroll,  
*Viget in cinere virtus.* In my youth  
I swore to find the Phoenix, being scorned  
By many who averred that no such fowl  
Inhabited the earth. And here, my lord,  
Before I answer Hilary's reproach,  
I beg all men to know the Phoenix lives;  
For I have seen him fly across the Nile,  
Beating the air with gold and purple plumes,  
Towards Yemen, where he reigns; this was  
last year,  
The thirtieth of my quest."

" Sir," said the King:  
" I marvel at your patience. Thirty years!"

## *THE ORDEAL*

“ Patience ? I know it not ! Embarked, I  
swore  
That thirty weeks, and sorely grudged the  
time,  
Should see the Phoenix caught and caged ;  
myself,  
Renowned throughout the world, and fixed  
in fame  
With Lancelot and Roland. Youth and hope  
Spare none of us—Syren and Circe linked  
In one divine betrayal of the world !  
Even while the Golden City towered behind  
And bathed its glittering shadow in the deep  
The Berber galleys swooped : captivity  
Her twisted talons settled in my flesh  
To tire on body and soul with dripping beak  
For thrice the time I vowed. That was the  
dawn !

## *THE ORDEAL*

Also in Hadramaut, five savage years  
Of lash and shackle, scornful destiny  
Awarded me. Tenacious death, in shapes  
Of thralldom, pestilence, contention, thirst,  
Shipwreck and famine, flame and blind  
despair,

Remained my mate by day, my watch by  
night.

Yet, and although I still am buffeted  
By every busy wind and stroke of chance:  
Deceived, disgraced, contemptuously foiled  
By oracles, by wantonness of fools,  
And by the sleepless masked malignity  
That men pursue the soul of man withal,  
I am neither taught nor tamed. Intolerance  
Of mundane things—of utter sanctity  
As of indulged desire—shines in the stars,  
And in the icy menace of the moon.

*THE ORDEAL*

From them my fire is kindled, keenest  
flame

Of passion ; for I look not to be praised  
Here in the courts of Kings and homes of  
men ;

Nor happily hereafter to usurp  
A blissful throne of that imagined world  
By terror-stricken envy reared in air  
For the immortal solace and reward  
Of humbleness and chastity, the true  
Accomplices, the virtuous other selves  
Of mediocrity and impotence.

But I desire to follow out this quest :  
Achieved or unachieved it is my own :  
Even if the glorious creature were no  
more . . .

A foolish word ! I have seen him, as I said :  
From Heliopolis he took his flight

## THE ORDEAL

Towards Yemen, like a rainbow laced with  
gems.

Whether I find him, or am overthrown  
Pursuing him, the world shall never know:  
My purpose is sufficient for my soul.  
Farewell at once. I must be gone—again  
To feel my heart leap at the sudden foe,  
The lonely battle in the wilderness;  
To come at night under the desert moon  
On pillars, ghostly porches, temples, towers  
Silent for centuries; to see at dawn  
The shadow of the Arab on the sand."

Sir Godfrey bowed and strode a pace away;  
Then stopped like one enchanted, wonder-  
ing  
What spell o'ermastered him. When from  
his dream

## *THE ORDEAL*

He woke, and felt his pinioned arms, a  
    blush  
Shone on his tawny cheek and untanned  
    brow.  
He muttered something quickly; stumbled  
    —stood,  
Staring before him.

“ Mediocrity  
And impotence!” cried Hilary. “ The  
    phrase,  
The very motto lechery inscribes  
Beneath the cuckold’s sign armorial,  
Crested dilemma, honour’s hatchment,  
    horns.  
This Phoenix-hunt, this magpie-tale of his  
Allures no sober judgment from the nest  
He fouled! Incredible effrontery!”

*THE ORDEAL*

“ Not in my thought, Sir Hilary,” said the King.

“ I cannot press a finger on the wrist  
Of treason, and declare ‘ This blood is  
false ’ ;

Nor is there a divining-rod for kings  
To tell the hearts of gold ; but I dare stake  
My Crown against an apple that the man  
Is honest : he forgot the charge preferred  
Against him.—Answer me : How came  
you, sir,

To be discovered with Sir Hilary’s wife ? ”

“ Oh, very simply ! ” said Sir Godfrey.

“ Ay ! ”

Groaned Hilary in his beard ; “ simply  
enough ! ”

*THE ORDEAL*

“ When I at last beheld the Phoenix, watched  
His dazzling flight stream through the east-  
ern air,

The sun fell down behind me, and my  
heart

Beset me in the darkness. Overpowered  
By deep desire to repossess a ring  
That was my mother's . . . Many men,  
my lord,

Of hardihood sufficient have been known  
To hold the memories of their mothers  
dear . . .

I told myself that having seen once more  
The Golden City, wandered through its  
streets

Of cheerful folk, and by the windy wharfs  
Where silent shipmen hang about, and stir  
The hearts of passers strangely, never more



*THE ORDEAL*

Should any thought withdraw me from my  
quest.

As for the ring, I knew not Hilary's  
wife

Possessed it ; but I knew that Bertha  
did.

It happened thus : At twenty years,  
alone

And penniless, house, trinkets — all I  
sold

To furnish fame with wings ; and straight-  
way shipped

For Egypt and the Phoenix. Ere we sailed  
I saw this Bertha wistfully approach,

And ran to her, for we were pleasant  
friends—

Sweethearts, perhaps. Younger than I she  
was,

*THE ORDEAL*

And like a palm-tree tall and lithe. I think  
Until that day I had not said one word  
Of love; but in the morning, half in jest,  
Shamefast I whispered, bidding her good-

bye,

'And will you marry me when I come back?'

Her blood dyed all her face and neck deep  
red:

She leaned aside and gazed askance with  
looks

As wide as day; then fronted me. Her  
sighs

Beat from her open mouth hot on my face  
Like scented winds that blow in Hadra-  
maut.

She trembled, sobbed, and while I won-  
dered fled—

In anger or in love I could not tell."

*THE ORDEAL*

“ Ay, ay ! ” went Hilary, with the dog-like  
leer

Of one whose ribs are grilled by torturers.

“ But when she sought me out upon the  
ship,

And silently embraced me meeting her,

I knew, I surely knew that it was love.

She knotted in my scarf a silken purse,

And said, ‘ A keepsake. Give me some-  
thing, sir. ’

The ring, my lord, was all I had to give.

I would have pawned, as I have spent, my  
soul

To serve my purpose: that metallic lie,

My mother’s talisman—its paltriness

As merchandise and unappraisable

Romance preserved it. Often I had watched

*THE ORDEAL*

My mother turn and turn it lost in thought ;  
And watching I divined its history.

With hoarded pence, my father, straitly  
kept,

Had bought it for her on a festival  
When they were children : love began with  
them

In April : and she showed me—for I asked  
If I divined aright—half-hidden zones

Engraved as with her ripening the ring  
On divers fingers had reposed in turn.

Quickly at Bertha's vehement desire  
I offered the remembrance I had kept.

She stretched her hand—a fragrant lily  
hand,

And slipped a petal through the pinchbeck  
hoop ;

Then clad me in her glance and stole away.

*THE ORDEAL*

Now that I think, I never have beheld  
In any other face or other eyes  
Of man or woman, or hero in my dreams,  
So great a passion, so profound a hope."

"Ha!" cried the King. "Regret has found  
you out?"

"Oh no, my lord! My spirit stands aloof  
In judgment of the past. The Moorish  
whips

Cut from my fancy Bertha's image, pale  
Even at the start. Scarcely, until I longed  
To have my mother's ring, did any thought  
Of Bertha's love offend me in my quest.  
After delays—the lackeys circumstance  
Provides abundantly for all my schemes—  
I reached the Golden City. Hilary's wife,

*THE ORDEAL*

They told me, was the Bertha I had known.  
I found her house, and seeing her with-  
out—

It could be no one else; indeed I seemed  
To catch her walk again—I went to her,  
Withdrawn among a grove of cypresses,  
And asked her headlong for my mother's  
ring.

She gave it me, as Hilary says, and looked,  
Poor soul, so sad, that pity wrung my  
heart.

I kissed her brow: down fell the silvery  
tears,  
And thrice she tried to speak; but Hilary  
came

And made this ugly rent in our adieus."

"This is the truth," said King Emanuel.

*THE ORDEAL*

"Lies! Subtle lies!" the husband hissed.

"Hear her!

The trap he sets himself. If her account  
Accord with his, chance deals in miracles."

Said Godfrey then, "My lord, I kissed his  
wife,

And therefore overlook the littleness  
Of his attack; but now that he has heard  
The truth, and still denies my honesty,  
I claim the combat."

"And the claim is just,"  
Emanuel said. "I stand for God; but  
step  
Aside, well-pleased that He should arbitrate  
Immediately. So, let the lists be set."

*THE ORDEAL*

“ But Bertha’s story ? ” stammered Hilary.

“ Sir,” said the King. “ The combat shall  
decide

Whether your wife requires to plead or no.”

“ Well—very well ! ” said Hilary. “ I am  
old ;

My joints are stiff ; my sinews slack ; my  
sight

Begins to fail ; ’tis ebbtide in my blood :

He like a lion from the desert comes

Supple and strong with questing up and  
down.

Behold an opportunity for God—

Which He will profit by ! ”

“ I doubt it not,”

The King said meaningly.



*THE ORDEAL*

But Godfrey said,  
“ What prate is this ? I am the better man,  
And Hilary shall fall before my lance.”

At noon the lists were set. About the earth,  
Whose sea-enamelled disk resplendent  
wheeled  
Among the hidden stars, deep-bosomed  
clouds,  
Horizon-haunting, towered and stooped;  
the sun  
Poured from his quenchless urn, high-held  
in heaven,  
A silent cataract of light, whereto  
The mounting larks with sinewy wings and  
throats  
Of tempered gold harnessed a voice in-  
spired.

## *THE ORDEAL*

But in the shining City the tilt-yard hummed  
With the inhuman gossip of the world—  
The lickerish crowd agape to dip their  
mouths

In purple-streaming agony, distrained  
From hearts mature for torture, newly  
plucked

And cast into the press.

Emanuel,

Whenas the sullen-sounding bell had rung  
The heavy peal of noon, gave forth the  
word.

Straightway the trumpets rang, and every  
look

Towards Bertha veered at once. The petu-  
lant throng

Again and yet again, with puckered brows

## *THE ORDEAL*

And hands aslant against the naked light,  
Had prowled and peered, and launched sur-  
mises wide

Of her repose and countenance serene—  
Inscrutable to eyes of cavillers;  
But now the winepress flowed, the bout  
began

With winks and elbowings and nimble nods.  
For at the trumpets' call a scarlet sign  
Flashed up on Bertha's face; and from the  
post

Where opposite the King she stood alone,  
Patient and proud, a smile of utter peace,  
A shaft of glory on her children fell;  
And they, disburdened, stretched their  
hands and laughed:

Since God Himself had hung His balance  
out,

## *THE ORDEAL*

Already they could hear the host of Heaven,  
With psalteries and far-resounding songs,  
Acclaim their mother's starry chastity,  
And laud the righteous Judge of all the  
earth.

A second time the trumpets rang—a cry  
Implacable with shrieking echoes winged;  
Then silence like a heavy dew came down.  
Before a breath could move the stagnant air,  
And while the pennoned lances of the  
twain—

Godfrey and Hilary in arms of proof—  
Upon the summons in the sockets couched  
Still quivered pausing, overthwart the lists  
A vagrant bee twanged like an airy lyre  
Of one rich-hearted chord. Swift under-  
neath

## THE ORDEAL

The honey-laden track the gleaming hoofs  
Of either spur-wrung charger gripped the  
ground,  
Flung forth and spanned the course with  
fluent speed  
Of thudding leaps entwined. Together  
hurled  
In uncontrolled assault — each rivet  
wrenched,  
Each nerve and artery of horse and man  
Shot through with scalding flame—helm-  
smitten, both  
Hung overborne and toppling urgently,  
Till Hilary in his stirrups rose and screamed,  
Startling his mastered steed, “ Go down to  
Hell ”—  
Astounded at his triumph and meanly  
glad

*THE ORDEAL*

That Godfrey should have fallen pierced  
through the brain  
By his haphazard, his unworthy lance,  
“Go down to Hell, and cook your Phoenix  
there!”

The instant murmur of the tossing crowd  
Sprang to a roar; and like a home-sick  
wretch

Delivered from the storm whose gliding hull  
Founders upon the welcome harbour-bar,  
The voice of malice thrust into her ears  
Even as the din and hubbub of the sea  
Deafens the drowning outcast, Bertha fell  
Wrecked in the very haven of her hope.

Her children, led by him whom she had  
nursed

## *THE ORDEAL*

To cheat the time beneath the hawthorn-  
    shade,  
Tongue-tied with grief and dazzled by their  
    tears,  
But bright instinctive creatures in the speed  
And promptness of their act, maidens and  
    youths,  
O'erskipped the barrier. Bertha then, sus-  
    tained  
By hands of love that trembled and were  
    strong,  
Arose, and midmost of her brood at bay  
Confronted the eclipse of her renown.

His latticed vizor raised, Sir Hilary cried  
Above the dwindled clamour, " Heaven has  
    judged,  
Oh King Emanuel! Bid her now confess!"

*THE ORDEAL*

“ I bid her speak. Speak, Bertha,” said  
the King,  
Heart-struck and pale, but waiting yet on  
God;  
While all the quidnuncs inly hugged them-  
selves,  
And market-haunters chafed their sweaty  
palms,  
For now, indeed, the winepress overflowed.

Heading her cygnets, Bertha paced the  
lists  
Towards the throne, a stately sufferer.  
Her courtesy not forgotten, and her glance  
Sweeping the gazers till it lit and hung  
Upon the watchful King; in either hand  
A child's close-clasped; and in her bosom  
pent



## *THE ORDEAL*

A tide of tears, she stood till silence reigned,  
Then lifted up a sick and shuddering voice.

But Hilary broke out, "What need, my  
lord ?

The judgment has been given : the sentence  
now

Is all that should be said."

"Your best and worst  
Is said and done!" the King declared.

"What should  
And should not be, who dare assume ? God's  
mind

Is not apparent yet. Your wife shall  
speak."

"Now, is this just ?" said Hilary.

*THE ORDEAL*

“ Just ? ” she cried.

“ My children at my skirt, before the world,  
My zealous husband and the King and God,  
I wish to speak ! ” Intolerant at last,  
Her mouth distorted and her eyes on fire,  
She threw her piercing challenge out : “ My  
love

Was never Hilary’s ! ” That said, she  
paused,

The mistress of her audience. Slowly then  
She bent her gaze on Godfrey’s mail-clad  
corpse :

Through the crushed beaver—the floodgate  
of his life—

A crimson current sluiced his helm, and  
stained

With ruddy umber a sodden patch of  
sand.

*THE ORDEAL*

But steadfastly she looked and proudly  
spake:

“ I loved the dead man there. O King, O  
God ”—

Now to the earthly throne and now to  
heaven—

“ His was the face and form adored the  
most

By noble maidens, grave and ardent: his  
The highest heart, the freest soul of all  
The aspirants of the City in the days  
When love laid claim to us who now are old.  
In dreams and potent melancholy steeped  
I felt the subtile essence, the desire,  
The pure, unmingled virtue of my life  
Yield up itself, a suppliant passion, bound  
To minister to his, or waste away  
The impatient captive of his memory.

*THE ORDEAL*

He loved me as a young man loves who  
knows

By hearsay only of the deeds of love—  
As virgins love he loved me; but without  
The overwhelming anguish I endured,  
I being a woman. When at last he spoke  
It was not till the luckless day he sailed  
On his adventure: 'Would I marry him  
When he came back?' My heart took fire:  
it seemed

To melt and flow: speech failed me and I  
fled.

But in the evening, when the land-breeze  
blew,

Breathless I hurried through the murmur-  
ing streets

Refreshed with scent of meadow-hay new-  
reaped

*THE ORDEAL*

Behind the Golden City. He saw me come  
Staring along the quay; he leapt ashore;  
He kissed me: but the ropes were casting  
off;

The ripple beat and chid his tardy barque.  
I twisted in his dress a silken purse  
With twenty golden ducats of my own;  
He on my finger thrust that piteous ring:  
And straight the sundering ocean lay be-  
tween,  
All in the springtime thirty years ago."

"A perfect tale," cried Hilary. "A plot  
Nicely prepared!"

"I have not done," she said.  
"Love like a dragon breathing smoke and  
armed

*THE ORDEAL*

In jewelled scales withdrew me to the den  
Of starless night his burning orbs illume.  
Whene'er I struggled in that dreadful hold,  
Where only long-drawn sighs are heard and  
groans

Unpitied ever, adamantine fangs  
Were mortised in my heart. So clutched  
and torn,

Year after year I waited on my knight,  
My lover, to deliver me from love.  
But madness came instead and death stood  
near:

These the abounding vigour of my race,  
And youth, long-suffering, quickly over-  
powered.

Forthwith to blight my new-blown summer-  
time

The vision of my hero dawned once more,

*THE ORDEAL*

And at my chamber-window in the night  
I saw the jewelled dragon vigilant.  
Then was it that I turned to thee, O God  
Who madest me! 'Thy handmaid, Lord,'  
I said;  
'Pity Thy handmaid! Him whom I adore  
On earth the most—in Thine own image  
shaped  
More excellently than all men beside—  
Has wandered over sea: no message comes,  
No token; none report him; he is lost—  
Is dead to me, for I am more than thought.  
Must I descend into the dust again  
And of my body see no fruit at all?  
O God, the heaped-up treasure of delight  
Garnered by Thee within me, may no man  
Unlock it but the loved one? Must I clasp  
No child of my own womb if he be dead

*THE ORDEAL*

Or come not back to me? O God, dear  
God,

I did not make myself: Thy strong desire  
Consumes me. Help me! help me!'—On  
the night

I wrestled thus in prayer, divine content  
Descended tranquilly and overbrimmed  
My famished heart; the lurking dragon  
whirled

His jewelled mail away, his blood-stained  
fangs;

And at my chamber-window watching me,  
And beckoning, and waiting to be born,  
The seraph faces of my children pressed.  
In widow's weeds I tarried one year more,  
Then chose Sir Hilary from out my throng  
Of honourable blandishers to be  
The father of my children—stately then



*THE ORDEAL*

And tall, a personable gentleman  
Some ten years older than myself: sedate  
He seemed and wise—his fame without a  
flaw.

I told him though I had no love to give  
I should be proud to be his faithful wife  
And bosom-friend. That pleased him best,  
he said—

Lying, because he strove to make of me  
An instrument of pleasure for himself;  
But like Zenobia, noblest of her sex,  
I kept my babes unsullied. Look at them !”

She stepped behind her children, seven in  
all—

Four lustrous youths, three maidens lovelier  
Than seraphs hallowed visionaries see.  
“ These are my witnesses.” Emanuel

*THE ORDEAL*

Bent towards them, blessing them. Sir  
Hilary,  
Hell glimmering in his visage, gnawed his  
tongue,  
And let his beaver down.

“ My Bertha here ”—  
Taking her eldest daughter by the hand—  
“ Sleepless all night, this morning to my  
room  
Came blushing with the dawn. Beside me  
couched,  
She told the tale of passion Sigismund  
Beneath the evening star had told to her,  
And in my arms fell peacefully asleep.”

At once a page attendant on the King  
Vaulted the barrier, and took his post

*THE ORDEAL*

Beside the younger Bertha, overjoyed  
To find his suit accepted, and of right  
Claiming a share in what should now befall  
His lady's house. The elder Bertha smiled  
A welcome, tender of any happiness  
Even in her misery; then made an end.

“ My daughter's passion wakened from the  
grave

The memory of the wonder-working stir  
And daybreak of my womanhood. I stole  
The ring—to me it seemed indeed a theft,  
A crime of sacrilege against the past,  
Which yet I had no courage to forgo—  
From out the casket where I buried it  
Upon my marriage-morn. Helpless I thrust  
The pale thing in my breast, and took it  
forth,

*THE ORDEAL*

And kissed it . . . out among the trees

I ran . . .

The meadow-hay new-reaped . . . I

saw him come;

He kissed me after thirty years . . . I

. . . God . . . ”

The younger Bertha caught her in her arms,

And dried her tears.

Well-pleased the King arose

To vindicate her fame; but Hilary cried,

“ This was appealed to God, and He has

judged:

There one adulterer lies; the other waits

The sentence of the King. Who looks with

lust

Commits adultery. Be strong; do right.

Dare you annul God's manifest decree ?

*THE ORDEAL*

Do you believe in God, Emanuel—  
No shifting thought of man's, a living  
God?"

A poignant voice from out his hollow  
casque;  
Whereat the King delayed the judgment,  
dulled  
By nerveless doubt.

But Bertha laughed, "Believe  
In God!"—shaking her loosened mane of  
gold  
From off her face, and with her heavy-  
lashed  
And azure-watered eyelids clearing up  
Her clouded vision—"I believe in God!  
And He inspires me now to understand  
His purpose in my lover's overthrow.

*THE ORDEAL*

Doubtless He needed him in Heaven  
to be

His champion against some challenger,  
Or to explore a new-made tract of worlds.

Me He requires to signify to men  
That those obey Him best and do His  
will

Implicitly, who on themselves alone  
Rely in peril of a tarnished name;  
For power divine in plenitude enough  
To conquer every ill endows us all,  
If valiantly we give it scope to work  
By taking on ourselves the total war.  
Had Godfrey beaten Hilary, 'Oh ay'—  
The gossips and the sponsors of report  
Would certainly have made the accepted  
word—

'The hardy, brilliant lover overthrows

*THE ORDEAL*

The age-bent husband.' Now myself can  
clear  
From every foul aspersion Godfrey's  
fame,  
Mine, and my children's. Wherefore I  
demand  
The Ordeal by Fire, Emanuel."

"I grant it," said the King, feeling him-  
self  
Heroic: "I believe in God and you.  
Choose, then: the bar; the ring?"

But Hilary said,  
"The way of ploughshares heated hot re-  
mains  
The ordeal provided by the law."

*THE ORDEAL*

“ The ploughshares!” said the King, held  
in the trap  
Of code that men will set to catch them-  
selves.

“ None ever traverse them uncharred, and  
few  
Escape with life.”

“ But I uncharred shall pass,”  
The victim said. “ Sir, I appeal to God  
Within me and about me and above  
To bear me scathless through the fiercest  
test.  
Heat hot your ploughshares—now!”

Her children quailed:  
“ No, mother—no!” they whispered.  
“ What!” she cried,



*THE ORDEAL*

“ You also doubt your mother’s chastity  
And God’s omnipotence and rectitude ! ”  
Abashed they fell behind her.

Still the King  
Debated with himself: but from the crowd  
A tigrish clamour burst, and watering  
mouths  
Gnashed as they roared, “ The plough-  
shares! Heat them hot!”

“ Hark!” said the King, “ it is the voice  
of God!  
Prepare the ordeal chosen and ordained.”

So when the evening threw across the  
west  
Fabrics of vapour fine as treasured lace—

*THE ORDEAL*

Dishevelled, faded, stained with crimson,  
trailed

And dipped in sacramental chalices  
Of sunset unforgotten while love lasts—  
Upon the damasked meadow fires were  
built

Beside the sounding threshold of the sea:  
Nine furnaces, fierce-tempered, wherewithal \  
The snoring bellows, plied by eager hands,  
Imparted to the iron the sexual hate  
Obscurely rankling in the heart of life,  
And now unloosed against the innocent.  
As at a fair men laughed obscenely, trolled  
The vapid catches ballad-mongers hawked,  
And munched the wares of wayside mer-  
chantmen.

Upon the City wall strange women  
climbed—

*THE ORDEAL*

No nearer might they stand: men ruled it  
so—

To watch their sister's martyrdom, unawed,  
Or with a dull disquietude, or to pray:  
For even soulless women sometimes pray  
As headless insects buzz. Emanuel  
Sat in a chair of state, and gripped the arms,  
Teeth clenched, eyes fixed, extorting from  
his soul

Belief that God would do what he desired.  
Sir Hilary stood by, the ripened grudge  
Of twenty years triumphant in his eyes,  
And in his rigid heart a holy sense  
Of dreadful duty done—one drop of gall,  
One only in his vengeful cup: the King  
In every charitable name had driven  
The children, guarded, out of sight and  
sound

*THE ORDEAL*

Of Bertha's hazard: thus the simpletons,  
Who liked their father little and adored  
The adulteress, were not to see the end!

Blindfolded, in her shroud, with naked feet,  
She waited for the signal to advance.

"Is all prepared?" the King demanded.

Ay;

All was prepared. Aghast and tremulous,  
He turned to Bertha: "Are you ready,  
now?"

"Ready," she said, clear-voiced, "God  
helping me!"

"What is your plea?" he asked; for this  
the law required.

*THE ORDEAL*

She answered: " If in thought or deed  
I once betrayed my husband's trust, may  
    . death  
Lay hold of me and drag me shrieking down  
A branded corpse among the smouldering  
    blades."

" In God's great heart the issue lies. Pro-  
    ceed."

This said, the King bent down his twitch-  
    ing face

✓ In prayer; for even men of parts will pray  
Against the wrong instead of smiting it,  
✓ Besotted with a creed.

The farriers,  
Aglow, begrimed and moist with smoky  
    sweat,

*THE ORDEAL*

Their ready pinchers on the coulters clasped  
And plucked them forth, sprinkling the  
dewy green

With jets of dying embers. Placed apart  
At intervals irregular, the nine  
Deep notes of carmine pulsed in unison  
Upon the hissing turf. Trumpet and drum  
Announced the ordeal; then softly raised  
A funeral dirge as Bertha, breathing quick,  
Set out upon her march. She placed her  
foot,

Her naked buoyant foot, dew-drenched and  
white,

She placed it firmly on the first red edge,  
Leapt half her height, and with a hideous  
cry

Fell down face-foremost brained upon the  
next.

*THE ORDEAL*

They took her from among the smouldering  
blades,

A branded corpse, and laid her on the bier  
Prepared: alive or dead, the record told  
Of none who trod this fiery path uncharred.

The miserable King arose and turned  
In haggard silence toward the city.

“ Sir,”

Said Hilary in an icy voice, “ the law  
Exacts your sentence.”

“ Bloody, hellish beast!”

Burst out Emanuel, weak and broken.

“ Sir,”

Said Hilary, “ you stand for God, and must

*THE ORDEAL*

Pronounce the doom which he has dumbly  
wrought.

You know the form."

Then sullenly the King:  
" Bertha, the wife of Hilary, is proved  
A foul adulteress upon her own appeal  
To Heaven, and in the market-place forth-  
with  
Shall be consumed by fire."

" So let it be,"  
The multitude replied. So was it done.  
And while the harlots and the prodigals  
Jested and danced about the blazing  
corpse,  
The moon, dispensing delegated light,  
Behind the City stealthily arose;



*THE ORDEAL*

And, fresh with scent of meadow-hay new-  
reaped,  
The land-breeze bore to many a mariner,  
Outward or homeward bound, the sweetest  
news  
Across the sounding threshold of the sea.

## A BALLAD OF A COWARD

THE trumpets pealed ; the echoes sang

A tossing fugue ; before it died,

Again the rending trumpets rang,

Again the phantom notes replied.

In galleries, on straining roofs,

At once ten thousand tongues were  
hushed,

When down the lists a storm of hoofs

From either border thundering rushed.

A knight whose arms were chased and set

With gold and gems, in fear withdrew

Before the fronts of tourney met,

Before the spears in splinters flew.

*A BALLAD OF A COWARD*

He reached the wilds. He cast away  
His lance and shield and arms of price;  
He turned his charger loose, and lay  
Face-downwards in his cowardice.

His wife had seen the recreant fly:  
She followed, found, and called his name.  
“Sweetheart, I will not have you die:  
My love,” she said, “can heal your  
shame.”

Not long his vanity withstood  
Her gentleness. He left his soul  
To her; and her solicitude,  
He being a coward, made him whole.

Yet was he blessed in heart and head;  
Forgiving; of his riches free;

*A BALLAD OF A COWARD*

Wise was he too, and deeply read,  
And ruled his earldom righteously.

A war broke out. With fateful speed  
The foe, eluding watch and ward,  
Conquered; and none was left to lead  
The land, save this faint-hearted lord.

“ Here is no shallow tournament,  
No soulless, artificial fight.  
Courageously, in deep content,  
I go to combat for the right.”

The hosts encountered: trumpets spoke;  
Drums called aloud; the air was torn  
With cannon, light by stifling smoke  
Estopped, and shrieking battle born.

*A BALLAD OF A COWARD*

But he ?—he was not in the van !

The vision of his child and wife ?  
Even that deserted him. He ran—  
The coward ran to save his life.

The lowliest men would sooner face  
A thousand dreadful deaths, than come  
Before their loved ones in disgrace ;  
Yet this sad coward hurried home :

For, as he fled, his cunning heart  
Declared he might be happy yet  
In some retreat where Love and Art  
Should swathe his soul against regret.

“ My wife ! my son ! For their dear sakes,”  
He thought, “ I save myself by flight.”—

*A BALLAD OF A COWARD*

He reached his place. "What comet  
shakes

Its baleful tresses on the night

Above my towers?" Alas, the foe

Had been before with sword and fire!

His loved ones in their blood lay low:

Their dwelling was their funeral pyre.

Then he betook him to a hill

Which in his happy times had been

His silent friend, meaning to kill

Himself upon its bosom green.

But an old mood at every tread

Returned; and with assured device

The wretched coward's cunning head

Distilled it into cowardice.

*A BALLAD OF A COWARD*

“ A snowy owl on silent wings  
Sweeps by ; and, ah ! I know the tune  
The wayward night-wind sweetly sings  
And dreaming birds in coverts croon.

“ The cocks their muffled catches crow ;  
The river ripples dark and bright ;  
I hear the pastured oxen low,  
And the whole rumour of the night.

“ The moon comes from the wind-swept  
hearth  
Of heaven ; the stars beside her soar ;  
The seas and harvests of the earth  
About her shadowy footsteps pour.

“ But though remembrances, all wet  
With happy tears, their tendrils coil

*A BALLAD OF A COWARD*

Close round my heart; though I be set  
And rooted in the ruddy soil,

“ My pulses with the planets leap;  
The veil is rent before my face;  
My aching nerves are mortised deep  
In furthest cavities of space;

“ Through the pervading ether speed  
My thoughts that now the stars rehearse;  
And should I take my life, the deed  
Would disarray the universe.”

Gross cowardice! Hope, while we breathe,  
Can make the meanest prize his breath,  
And still with starry garlands wreath  
The nakedness of life and death.



*A BALLAD OF A COWARD*

He wandered vaguely for a while;  
Then thought at last to hide his shame  
And self-contempt far in an isle  
Among the outer deeps; but came,  
Even there, upon a seaboard dim,  
Where like the slowly ebbing tide  
That weltered on the ocean's rim  
With sanguine hues of sunset dyed,  
The war still lingered. Suddenly,  
Ere he could run, the bloody foam  
Of battle burst about him; he,  
Scarce knowing what he did, struck  
home,  
As those he helped began to fly,  
Bidding him follow. "Nay," he said;  
"Nay; I die fighting—even I!"  
And happy and amazed fell dead.

## COMING

IN every noble name  
What are we waiting for ?  
We pray, and we declaim !  
Are we afraid of war ?  
Drummer, beat the drum !  
Trumpets, blow !  
Anguished voices bid us come !  
At last we go !

Shall Europe cry “ God speed ! ”  
To some less famous land ?  
Nay ; who shall take the lead,  
If England holds her hand ?

*COMING*

Proud ? We should be proud !  
Drummer, beat the drum !  
Anguished voices call aloud,  
“ England, come ! ”

Upon the blood-stained sod  
A helpless people bow ;  
We still have stood for God,  
And shall we falter now ?  
The sword is in our hand ;  
Our step is on the sea ;  
We are coming, sister land,  
To set you free !

## BATTLE

THE war of words is done ;  
The red-lipped cannon speak ;  
The battle has begun.

The web your speeches spun  
Tears and blood shall streak ;  
The war of words is done.

Smoke enshrouds the sun ;  
Earth staggers at the shriek  
Of battle new begun.

Poltroons and braggarts run :  
Woe to the poor, the meek !  
The war of words is done.

*BATTLE*

“ And hope not now to shun  
The doom that dogs the weak,”  
Thunders every gun ;

“ Victory must be won.”  
When the red-lipped cannon speak,  
The war of words is done,  
The slaughter has begun.

## THE HYMN OF ABDUL HAMID

WHENE'ER Thy mosque I trod  
I heard my sabre sigh,  
" There is no God but God;  
Believe in Him or die!

" Abdul the Bless'd! You must  
Pursue the Prophet's path!  
Up! slake the eager lust  
Of God's avenging wrath!"

Islam! a dreadful call!  
Long, long I made delay.  
" My back is at the wall:  
Look, Lord; I stand at bay!

*THE HYMN OF ABDUL HAMID*

“ The eagles throng,” I cried,  
“ Expecting me to die:  
The Powers my throne deride;  
I am the Sick Man, I!”

But there my troops were ranked,  
A weapon to my hand;  
And still my sabre clanked,  
“ Go forth and purge the land!”

At last Mohammed’s sword,  
The Key of Heaven and Hell,  
I drew; and at my word  
A hundred thousand fell,

God-hated: in their day,  
Foul cumberers of the earth;  
Now theirs is ours; and they,  
Fuel for Shetan’s hearth.

*THE HYMN OF ABDUL HAMID*

Though journalists proclaimed  
That things were at the worst;  
Though Ministers were blamed;  
Though poets sang and cursed;

Though priests in every church  
Prayed God to shield the right,  
God left them in the lurch:  
They were afraid to fight!

Words, words they slung; while we,  
Indifferent to the cost,  
Fulfilled God's high decree  
In slaughtering the lost.

The Powers blasphemed beneath;  
Above Heaven smiled delight;  
Ho! Europe gnashed her teeth;  
And Greece began to bite.



*THE HYMN OF ABDUL HAMID*

They fell into the pit  
They dug for our dismay;  
The biter soon was bit;  
The spoilers are our prey!

The Sick Man ? No; the Strong!  
Prestige is ours again!  
God gives us a new song  
Like sunshine after rain.

Grasping a shadow, lo,  
The Dog has lost his bone—  
The Christian Dog! Even so!  
Allah is God alone!

## WAR-SONG

IN anguish we uplift  
A new unhallowed song:  
The race is to the swift;  
The battle to the strong.

Of old it was ordained  
That we, in packs like curs,  
Some thirty million trained  
And licensed murderers,

In crime should live and act,  
If cunning folk say sooth  
Who flay the naked fact  
And carve the heart of truth.

*WAR-SONG*

The rulers cry aloud,  
    “ We cannot cancel war,  
The end and bloody shroud  
    Of wrongs the worst abhor,  
And order's swaddling band :  
    Know that relentless strife  
Remains by sea and land  
    The holiest law of life.  
From fear in every guise,  
    From sloth, from lust of pelf,  
By war's great sacrifice  
    The world redeems itself.  
War is the source, the theme  
    Of art ; the goal, the bent  
And brilliant academe  
    Of noble sentiment ;  
The augury, the dawn  
    Of golden times of grace ;

*WAR-SONG*

The true catholicon,  
And blood-bath of the race."

We thirty million trained  
And licensed murderers,  
Like zanies rigged, and chained  
By drill and scourge and curse  
In shackles of despair  
We know not how to break—  
What do we victims care  
For art, what interest take  
In things unseen, unheard ?  
Some diplomat no doubt  
Will launch a heedless word,  
And lurking war leap out !

We spell-bound armies then,  
Huge brutes in dumb distress,

*WAR-SONG*

Machines compact of men  
    Who once had consciences,  
Must trample harvests down—  
    Vineyard, and corn and oil;  
Dismantle town by town,  
    Hamlet and homestead spoil  
On each appointed path,  
    Till lust of havoc light  
A blood-red blaze of wrath  
    In every frenzied sight.

In many a mountain-pass,  
    Or meadow green and fresh,  
Mass shall encounter mass  
    Of shuddering human flesh;  
Opposing ordnance roar  
    Across the swaths of slain,  
And blood in torrents pour

*WAR-SONG*

In vain—always in vain,  
For war breeds war again !

The shameful dream is past,  
The subtle maze untrod :  
We recognize at last  
That war is not of God.  
Wherefore we now uplift  
Our new unhallowed song :  
The race is to the swift,  
The battle to the strong.

## THE BADGE OF MEN

“ IN shuttered rooms let others grieve,  
And coffin thought in speech of lead;  
I'll tie my heart upon my sleeve:  
It is the Badge of Men,” he said.

His friends forsook him: “ Who was he ! ”  
Even beggars passed him with a grin:  
Physicians called it lunacy;  
And priests, the unpardonable sin.

He strove, he struck for standing-ground:  
They beat him humbled from the field;  
For though his sword was keen, he found  
His mangled heart a feeble shield.

*THE BADGE OF MEN*

He slunk away, and sadly sought  
The wilderness—false friend of woe.  
“ Man is The Enemy,” he thought;  
But Nature proved a fiercer foe:

The vampire sucked, the vulture tore,  
And the old dragon left its den,  
Agape to taste the thing he wore—  
The ragged, bleeding Badge of Men.

“ Against the Fates there stands no charm,  
For every force takes its own part:  
I’ll wear a buckler on my arm,  
And in my bosom hide my heart! ”

But in his bosom prisoned fast  
It pained him more than when it beat  
Upon his sleeve; and so he cast  
His trouble to the ghouls to eat.



*THE BADGE OF MEN*

Back to the city, there and then

He ran ; and saw, through all disguise,  
On every sleeve the Badge of Men :  
For truth appears to cruel eyes.

Straight with his sword he laid about,  
And hacked and pierced their hearts,  
until

The beaten terror-stricken rout  
Begged on their knees to know his will.

He said, " I neither love nor hate ;  
I would command in everything."  
They answered him, " Heartless and great !  
Your slaves we are : be you our king ! "

## THE UNRESIGNED MOURNER

UNWILLING tears on silken lashes,  
Sighs and lamentations deep!  
Why do you sit in dust and ashes,  
Lady, lady, why do you weep ?

“ Because, although my soul that hastened  
To welcome love is now bereft  
Of happiness, I live unchastened,  
And curse the bitter anguish left.”

## THE GIFT

SOLACING tears,  
The suppliant's sigh,  
Repentant years  
The fates deny;  
But tortured breath  
Has one ally,  
The gift of death,  
The power to die.

## EARTH TO EARTH

WHERE the region grows without a lord,  
Between the thickets emerald-stoled,  
In the woodland bottom the virgin sward,  
The cream of the earth, through depths  
of mold

O'erflowing wells from secret cells,  
While the moon and the sun keep watch  
and ward,  
And the ancient world is never old.

Here, alone, by the grass-green hearth  
Tarry a little: the mood will come!  
Feel your body a part of earth;  
Rest and quicken your thought at home;

*EARTH TO EARTH*

Take your ease with the brooding trees;  
Join in their deep-down silent mirth  
The crumbling rock and the fertile loam.

Listen and watch! The wind will sing;  
And the day go out by the western gate;  
The night come up on her darkling wing;  
And the stars with flaming torches wait.  
Listen and see! And love and be  
The day and the night and the world-wide  
thing  
Of strength and hope you contemplate.

No lofty Patron of Nature! No;  
Nor a callous devotee of Art!  
But the friend and the mate of the high and  
the low,

*EARTH TO EARTH*

And the pal to take the vermin's part,  
Your inmost thought divinely wrought,  
In the grey earth of your brain aglow  
With the red earth burning in your heart.

## MY LILY

I MUST sing you a song,  
Or my heart will break,  
For all the night long  
I lie awake,  
And all the day through  
I am sorry like you  
For nobody's sake,  
For nobody's sake,  
My lily, my lily  
You and I,  
My lily, sad lily!

Since the day has the sun,  
And the night the moon,  
Though love we have none,  
How soon, how soon

*MY LILY*

Our hearts may awake  
For somebody's sake,  
    And our lives be in tune,  
    Our lives be in tune,  
My lily, my lily  
You and I,  
My lily, sweet lily!



## PRINCE OF THE FAIRIES

OVER the mountains, happy and bold,  
The Prince of the Fairies a-wooing came  
With a ring and a brooch and a crown of  
gold,

And a heart of the same, a heart of the  
same!

And each of them, all of them, every one  
He would lay at her feet  
If he only could meet  
The loveliest maiden under the sun.

They hated him heartily, burghers and  
peers;  
For the merchants' daughters were ready  
to die

*PRINCE OF THE FAIRIES*

And the queens of the earth would have  
given their ears

For a touch of his hand or a glance of his  
eye:

But he laughed and he said to them every  
one,

“ Now, by yea and by nay,

I have nothing to say

Except to the loveliest under the sun.”

Back o’er the mountains, hardly so bold,

The Prince of the Fairies lamenting came,

Till he met in the way with her curls of gold

And her heart of the same, her heart of  
the same,

A damsel a-watching her geese every one:

“ Lo,” he shouted, “ my queen!

For at last I have seen

‘The loveliest maiden under the sun!’”

## THE STOOP OF RHENISH

WHEN dogs in office frown you down,  
And malice smirches your renown;  
When fools and knaves your blunders twit,  
And melancholy dries your wit;

Be no more dull

But polish and plenish

Your empty skull

With a stoop of Rhenish.

Drink by the card,

Drink by the score,

Drink by the yard,

Drink evermore.

When seamy sides begin to show,  
And dimples into wrinkles grow;

*THE STOOP OF RHENISH*

When care comes in by hook or crook  
And settles at your ingle-nook,

Never disdain

To polish and plenish  
Your rusty brain

With a stoop of Rhenish.

Drink by the card,

Drink by the score,

Drink by the yard,

Drink evermore!

When hope gets up before the dawn,

And every goose appears a swan ;

When time and tide, and chance and fate

Like lackeys on your wishes wait ;

Then fill the bowl,

And polish and plenish

*THE STOOP OF RHENISH*

Your happy soul

With a stoop of Rhenish.

Drink by the card,

Drink by the score,

Drink by the yard,

Drink evermore!

## MATINÉES

### I

NIGHT went down; the twilight ceased;  
The moon withdrew her phantom flame;  
In pearl and silver out of the east,  
Pallid and vigilant, morning came:  
By heath and hill with trumpets shrill  
The orient wind declared his name:—

“ Morning! Morning! Mighty, alone,  
Light, the light, whose titles are  
Courage and hope, ascends his throne  
Over the head of every star:  
Terror and pain are chained and slain,  
And mournful shadows flee afar.”

## *MATINÉES*

### II

From the night-haunt where vapours crowd  
The airy outskirts of the earth  
A winding caravan of cloud  
Rose when the morning's punctual hearth  
Began to charm the winds and skies  
With odours fresh and golden dyes.

It made a conquest of the sun,  
And tied his beams; but, in the game  
Of hoodman-blind, the rack, outdone,  
Beheld the brilliant captive claim  
Forfeit on forfeit, as he pressed  
The mountains to his burning breast.

Above the path by vapours trod  
A ringing causey seemed to be,

## *MATINÉES*

Whereby the orient, silver-shod,  
Rode out across the Atlantic sea,  
An embassy of valour sent  
Under the echoing firmament.

And while the hearkener divined  
A clanging cavalcade on high,  
This rush and trample of the wind  
Arose among the tree-tops nigh,  
For mystery is the craft profound,  
The sign, and ancient trade of sound.

An unseen roadman breaking flint,  
If echo and the winds conspire  
To dedicate his morning's stint,  
May beat a tune out, dew and fire  
So wrought that heaven might lend an ear,  
And Ariel hush his harp to hear.



## HOLIDAY AT HAMPTON COURT

SCALES of pearly cloud inlay

North and south the turquoise sky,

While the diamond lamp of day

Quenchless burns, and time on high

A moment halts upon his way

Bidding noon again good-bye.

Gaffers, gammers, huzzies, louts,

Couples, gangs, and families

Sprawling, shake, with Babel-shouts

Bluff King Hal's funereal trees;

And eddying groups of stare-about

Quiz the sandstone Hercules.

*HOLIDAY AT HAMPTON COURT*

When their tongues and tempers tire,  
Harry and his little lot  
Condescendingly admire  
Lozenge-bed and crescent-plot,  
Aglow with links of azure fire,  
Pansy and forget-me-not.

Where the emerald shadows rest  
In the lofty woodland aisle,  
Chaffing lovers quaintly dressed  
Chase and double many a mile,  
Indifferent exiles in the west  
Making love in cockney style.

Now the echoing palace fills;  
Men and women, girls and boys  
Trample past the swords and frills,  
Kings and Queens and trulls and toys;

*HOLIDAY AT HAMPTON COURT*

Or listening loll on window-sills,  
Happy amateurs of noise!

That for pictured rooms of state!  
Out they hurry, wench and knave,  
Where beyond the palace-gate  
Dusty legions swarm and rave,  
With laughter, shriek, inane debate,  
Kentish fire and comic stave.

Voices from the river call;  
Organs hammer tune on tune;  
Larks triumphant over all  
Herald twilight coming soon,  
For as the sun begins to fall  
Near the zenith gleams the moon.

## IN THE ISLE OF DOGS

WHILE the water-wagon's ringing showers  
Sweetened the dust with a woodland smell,  
" Past noon, past noon, two sultry hours,"  
Drowsily fell  
From the schoolhouse clock  
In the Isle of Dogs by Millwall Dock.

Mirrored in shadowy windows draped  
With ragged net or half-drawn blind  
Bowsprits, masts, exactly shaped  
To woo or fight the wind,  
Like monitors of guilt  
By strength and beauty sent,  
Disgraced the shameful houses built  
To furnish rent.

*IN THE ISLE OF DOGS*

From the pavements and the roofs  
In shimmering volumes wound  
The wrinkled heat ;  
Distant hammers, wheels and hoofs,  
A turbulent pulse of sound,  
Southward obscurely beat,  
The only utterance of the afternoon,  
Till on a sudden in the silent street  
An organ-man drew up and ground  
The Old Hundredth tune.

Forthwith the pillar of cloud that hides the  
past  
Burst into flame,  
Whose alchemy transmuted house and mast,  
Street, dockyard, pier and pile :  
By magic sound the Isle of Dogs became  
A northern isle—

*IN THE ISLE OF DOGS*

A green isle like a beryl set  
In a wine-coloured sea,  
Shadowed by mountains where a river met  
The ocean's arm extended royally.

There also in the evening on the shore  
An old man ground the Old Hundredth  
tune,

An old enchanter steeped in human lore,  
Sad-eyed, with whitening beard, and visage  
lank:

Not since and not before,  
Under the sunset or the mellowing moon,  
Has any hand of man's conveyed  
Such meaning in the turning of a crank.

Sometimes he played  
As if his box had been

*IN THE ISLE OF DOGS*

An organ in an abbey richly lit;  
For when the dark invaded day's demesne,  
And the sun set in crimson and in gold;  
When idlers swarmed upon the esplanade,  
And a late steamer wheeling towards the  
    quay  
Struck founts of silver from the darkling  
    sea,  
The solemn tune arose and shook and rolled  
Above the throng,  
Above the hum and tramp and bravely knit  
All hearts in common memories of song.

Sometimes he played at speed;  
Then the Old Hundredth like a devil's mass  
Instinct with evil thought and evil deed,  
Rang out in anguish and remorse. Alas!

*IN THE ISLE OF DOGS*

That men must know both Heaven and  
Hell!

Sometimes the melody  
Sang with the murmuring surge;  
And with the winds would tell  
Of peaceful graves and of the passing bell.  
Sometimes it pealed across the bay  
A high triumphal dirge,  
A dirge  
For the departing undefeated day.

A noble tune, a high becoming mate  
Of the capped mountains and the deep  
broad firth;  
A simple tune and great,  
The fittest utterance of the voice of earth.



## AFTERNOON

THE hostess of the sky, the moon,  
    Already stoops to entertain  
The golden light of afternoon,  
    And the wan earthshine from the plain.

No rustling wings, no voices warp  
    The ripened stillness of the day;  
Behind the Downs the sheltered thorpe  
    Expectant overhangs the way.

What laughter, whisper, sigh or groan,  
    A hazardous, a destined sound,  
Shall first usurp the airy throne  
    Where silence rules with twilight  
    crowned ?

*AFTERNOON*

Hark! hark! an antique noise! Across  
The road the bellows fires anew  
With jar and sough the hissing dross,  
Close-raked about the half-wrought shoe.

From the swart chimney lilac smoke,  
The blacksmith's prayer, to heaven ascends;

The hammers double stroke on stroke;  
The stubborn iron sparkling bends.

Then voices near and far break out;  
The starlings in the tree-tops scold;  
The larks against each other shout;  
The blackbirds scatter pearl and gold;

The jackdaws prate; the cuckoos call;  
And shrill enough to reach the spheres  
Resounds the brazen madrigal  
Of half a hundred chanticleers.

## INSOMNIA

HE wakened quivering on a golden rack  
Inlaid with gems: no sign of change, no  
fear  
Or hope of death came near;  
Only the empty ether hovered black  
About him stretched upon his living bier,  
Of old by Marlin's Master deftly wrought:  
Two Seraphim of Gabriel's helpful race  
In that far nook of space  
With iron levers wrenched and held him  
taut.

The Seraph at his head was Agony;  
Delight, more terrible, stood at his feet:  
Their sixfold pinions beat

*INSOMNIA*

The darkness, or were spread immovably,  
Poising the rack, whose jewelled fabric  
meet

To strain a god, did fitfully unmask  
With olive light of chrysoprases dim  
The smiling Seraphim  
Implacably intent upon their task.

## THE LAST ROSE

“ OH, which is the last rose ? ”

A blossom of no name.

At midnight the snow came ;

At daybreak a vast rose,

In darkness unfurled,

O'er-petaled the world.

Its odourless pallor

Blossomed forlorn,

Till radiant valour

Established the morn—

Till the night

Was undone

*THE LAST ROSE*

In her fight  
With the sun.

The brave orb in state rose  
And crimson he shone first;  
While from the high vine  
Of heaven the dawn burst,  
Staining the great rose  
From sky-line to sky-line.

The red rose of morn  
A white rose at noon turned;  
But at sunset reborn,  
All red again soon burned.  
Then the pale rose of noonday  
Re-bloomed in the night,  
And spectrally white

*THE LAST ROSE*

In the light  
Of the moon lay.

But the vast rose  
Was scentless,  
And this is the reason:  
When the blast rose  
Relentless,  
And brought in due season  
The snow-rose, the last rose  
Congealed in its breath,  
There came with it treason;  
The traitor was Death.

In lee-valleys crowded,  
The sheep and the birds  
Were frozen and shrouded  
In flights and in herds.

*THE LAST ROSE*

In highways  
And byways  
The young and the old  
Were tortured and maddened  
And killed by the cold.  
But many were gladdened  
By the beautiful last rose,  
The blossom of no name  
That came when the snow came,  
In darkness unfurled—  
The wonderful vast rose  
That filled all the world.



## SUMMER RAIN

THE flowers with dust disgraced  
Droop in garth and plain ;  
But the summer tempests haste  
With lustral rain.

The banded vapour rolls,  
Shadowing hill and town ;  
Anon the thunder tolls,  
The showers come down.

Margents where the salt winds pass,  
The freshened sea-pinks fret ;  
The roses change to hippocras  
The heaven's pearly sweat ;

*SUMMER RAIN*

And the flowers all shine and all the grass  
Like jewels newly set,  
Sapphire bright and chrysolite,  
And emeralds dripping wet.

Like smoke from a happy hearth,  
Out of the meads and the bowers,  
The spicy dust of the moistened earth  
And the rainy scent of the flowers  
Translate to silence sweet the mirth  
Of the silvery ringing showers.

## THE PRICE

TERRIBLE is the price  
Of beginning anew, of birth;  
For Death has loaded dice.

Men hurry and hide like mice;  
But they cannot evade the Earth,  
And Life, Death's fancy price.

A blossom once or twice,  
Love lights on Summer's hearth;  
But Winter loads the dice.

In jangling shackles of ice,  
Ragged and bleeding, Mirth  
Pays the Piper's price.

*THE PRICE*

The dance is done in a trice :  
    Death belts his bony girth ;  
And struts, and rattles his dice.

Let Virtue play or Vice,  
    Beside his sombre firth  
Life is the lowest price  
Death wins with loaded dice.

## THE UNKNOWN

To brave and to know the unknown  
Is the high world's motive and mark,  
Though the way with snares be strewn.

The Earth itself alone  
Wheels through the light and the dark  
Onward to meet the unknown.

Each soul, upright or prone,  
While the owl sings or the lark,  
Must pass where the bones are strewn.

Power on the loftiest throne  
Can fashion no certain ark  
That shall stem and outride the unknown.

*THE UNKNOWN*

Beauty must doff her zone,  
Strength trudge unarmed and stark,  
Though the way with eyes be strewn.

This only can atone,  
The high world's motive and mark,  
To brave and to know the unknown  
Though the way with fire be strewn.

## WAITING

WITHIN unfriendly walls

We starve—or starve by stealth.

Oxen fatten in their stalls;

You guard the harrier's health:

They never can be criminals,

And can't compete for wealth.

/ From the mansion and the palace

Is there any help or hail

For the tenants of the alleys,

\ Of the workhouse and the jail?

Though lands await our toil,

And earth half-empty rolls,

Cumberers of English soil,

We cringe for orts and doles—

## *WAITING*

Prosperity's accustomed foil,  
Millions of useless souls.  
In the gutters and the ditches  
Human vermin festering lurk—  
We, the rust upon your riches;  
We, the flaw in all your work.

Come down from where you sit;  
We look to you for aid.  
Take us from the miry pit,  
And lead us undismayed:  
Say, " Even you, outcast, unfit,  
Forward with sword and spade!"  
And myriads of us idle  
Would thank you through our tears,  
Though you drove us with a bridle,  
And a whip about our ears!



*WAITING*

From cloudy cape to cape

    The teeming waters seethe;

Golden grain and purple grape

    The regions overwreathe.

Will no one help us to escape ?

    We scarce have room to breathe.

    You might try to understand us:

        We are waiting night and day

    For a captain to command us,

        And the word we must obey.

## THE ARISTOCRAT

THEY sundered usage like a wedge ;  
They swept the ancients from their  
    stools ;  
By piracy, by sacrilege,  
By war, across the necks of fools  
A royal road, the strong men strode.  
But other times have other tools.

The warlord and the churchlord stir  
The pulses of the world no more ;  
The trader and the usurer  
Have passed the lion-guarded door ;  
The praise, the prayer, the incensed air  
Ascend to us from every share.

*THE ARISTOCRAT*

A Money-lord, unheralded,  
I issue from a vulgar strain  
Of churls, who spiced their daily bread  
With hungry toil in sun and rain,  
A secret dower of patience power  
And courage in my blood and brain.

Though Corner, Trust and Company  
Are subtler than the old-time tools,  
The Sword, the Rack, the Gallowstree,  
I traverse none of Nature's rules;  
I lay my yoke on feeble folk,  
And march across the necks of fools.

My friends and foes adventured much;  
But elbowing iron pots the delf

## THE ARISTOCRAT

## Go down in shards; or some rude touch

## Of fact installs upon the shelf

**Souls slimly cast: for me, I last,**

**I wiser, braver, more myself.**

not clear

[illegible]

## THE OUTCAST

SOUL, be your own  
Pleasance and mart,  
A land unknown,  
A state apart.

Scowl, and be rude  
Should love entice;  
Call gratitude  
The costliest vice.

Deride the ill  
By fortune sent;  
Be scornful still  
If foes repent.

*THE OUTCAST*

When curse and stone  
Are hissed and hurled,  
Aloof, alone  
Disdain the world.

Soul, disregard  
The bad, the good;  
Be haughty, hard,  
Misunderstood.

Be neutral; spare  
No humblest lie,  
And overbear  
Authority.

Laugh wisdom down;  
Abandon fate;

*THE OUTCAST*

Shame the renown  
Of all the great.

Dethrone the past;  
Deed, vision—naught  
Avails at last  
Save your own thought.

Though on all hands  
The powers unsheathe  
Their lightning-brands  
And from beneath,

And from above  
One curse be hurled  
With scorn, with love  
Affront the world.

## THE PIONEER

WHY, he never can tell;

But, without a doubt,

He knows very well

He must trample out

Through forest and fell

The world about

A way for himself,

A way for himself.

By sun and star,

Forlorn and lank,

O'er cliff and scar,

O'er bog and bank,

He hears afar



*THE PIONEER*

The expresses clank,  
“ You’ll never get there,  
You’ll never get there ! ”

His bones and bread  
Poor Turlygod  
From his wallet spread  
On the grass-green sod,  
And stared and said  
With a mow and a nod,  
“ Whither away, sir,  
Whither away ? ”

“ I’m going alone,  
Though Hell forfend,  
By a way of my own  
To the bitter end.”  
He gnawed a bone

*THE PIONEER*

And snarled, " My friend,  
You'll soon get there,  
You'll soon get there."

But whether or no,  
The world is round;  
And he still must go  
Through depths profound,  
O'er heights of snow,  
On virgin ground  
To find a grave,  
To find a grave.

For he knows very well  
He must trample out  
Through Heaven and Hell,  
With never a doubt,  
A way of his own  
The world about.

## THE HERO

My thought sublimes  
A common deed ;  
In evil times  
In utmost need,  
My spirit climbs  
Where dragons breed.

Nor will I trip  
Even at the hiss  
On the drawn lip  
Of the abyss :  
My footsteps grip  
The precipice.

*THE HERO*

Applause and blame

Let prophets share:

My secret aim

The deed I dare,

My own acclaim

Comprise my care.

Above the laws,

Against the light

That overawes

The world I fight

And win, because

I have the might.

## ECLOGUES

### I

#### THE MERCHANTMAN

#### THE MARKETHAUNTERS

##### *The Markethaunters*

Now, while our money is piping hot  
From the mint of our toil that coins the  
sheaves,  
Merchantman, merchantman, what have  
you got  
In your tabernacle hung with leaves ?

## *ECLOGUES*

What have you got ?  
The sun rides high ;  
Our money is hot ;  
We must buy, buy, buy !

### *The Merchantman*

I come from the elfin king's demesne  
With chrysolite, hyacinth, tourmaline ;  
I have emeralds here of living green ;  
I have rubies, each like a cup of wine ;  
And diamonds, diamonds that never have  
been  
Outshone by eyes the most divine !

### *The Markethaunters*

Jewellery ?—Baubles ; bad for the soul ;  
Desire of the heart and lust of the eye !

## *ECLOGUES*

Diamonds, indeed! We wanted coal.

What else do you sell? Come, sound  
your cry!

Our money is hot;

The night draws nigh;

What have you got

That we want to buy?

### *The Merchantman*

I have here enshrined the soul of the rose

Exhaled in the land of the daystar's birth;

I have casks whose golden staves enclose

Eternal youth, eternal mirth;

And cordials that bring repose,

And the tranquil night, and the end of  
the earth.

## ECLOGUES

### *The Markethaunters*

Rapture of wine ? But it never pays :

We must keep our common-sense alert.

Raisins are healthier, medicine says—

Raisins and almonds for dessert.

But we want to buy ;

For our money is hot,

And age draws nigh :

What else have you got ?

### *The Merchantman*

I have lamps that gild the lustre of noon ;

Shadowy arrows that pierce the brain ;

Dulcimers strung with beams of the moon ;

Psalteries fashioned of pleasure and pain ;



## ECLOGUES

A song and a sword and a haunting tune  
That may never be offered the world  
again.

### *The Markethaunters*

Dulcimers! psalteries! Whom do you  
mock?

Arrows and songs? We have axes to  
grind!

Shut up your booth and your mouldering  
stock,

For we never shall deal.—Come away;  
let us find

What the others have got

We must buy, buy, buy;

For our money is hot,

And death draws nigh.

*ECLOGUES*

II

THE FOOL

WORLDLY WISEMAN

*The Fool*

IN haste, ere my senses wither,  
I travel and search the night:  
Whence am I ? what am I ? whither ?  
I must have fullest light.

• *Worldly Wiseman*

That is your cry ! Take heed ;  
Look to your steps, I say.  
Return, for now, indeed,  
Soul-traps beset your way :

*ECLOGUES*

Some man-devouring creed

Will seize you for a prey—

Some engine, baited bright

With immortality

Will drag you out of sight

And rend you: know that he

Who must have fullest light

Plots for his enemy.

In youth we hope; with age

The bargain seems unjust;

But yet though none engage

For Death's cold dust to dust—

The fixed, the only wage—

We take our doom on trust.

Such is the gentle rede

That prudent men embrace—

## ECLOGUES

No fierce, enchanting creed  
To live for in disgrace,  
But good enough at need  
In any market-place.

Stare at the darkness, shout  
Your frenzied how and why,  
No ghost will whet your doubt,  
No echo give reply;  
Only the world will flout,  
And fortune pass you by.

### *The Fool*

Let chance sway hither and thither,  
And the world be wrong or right,  
Here, now, ere my sinews wither,  
I wrestle with infinite night:  
Whence am I ? what am I ? whither ?  
I will have fullest light.

*ECLOGUES*

III

ARTIST

VOTARY

*Votary*

What gloomy outland region have I won ?

*Artist*

This is the Vale of Hinnom. What are  
you ?

*Votary*

A Votary of Life. I thought this tract,  
With rubbish choked, had been a thorough-  
fare

For many a decade now.

*Artist*

No highway here !  
And those who enter never can return.

*ECLOGUES*

*Votary*

But since my coming is an accident—

*Artist*

All who inhabit Hinnom enter there  
By accident, carelessly cast aside,  
Or self-inducted in an evil hour.

*Votary*

But I shall walk about it and go forth.

*Artist*

I said so when I came; but I am here.

*Votary*

What brought you hither?

*Artist*

Chance, no other power:  
My tragedy is common to my kind.—  
Once from a mountain-top at dawn I saw

## *ECLOGUES*

My life pass by, a pageant of the age,  
Enchanting many minds with sound and  
light,

Array and colour, deed, device and spell.  
And to myself I said aloud, " When thought  
And passion shall be rooted deep, and  
fleshed

In all experience man may dare, yet front  
His own interrogation unabashed:  
Winged also, and inspired to cleave with  
might

Abysses and the loftiest firmament:  
When my capacity and art are ranked  
Among the powers of nature, and the world  
Awaits my message, I will paint a scene  
Of life and death, so tender, so humane,  
That lust and avarice lulled awhile, shall gaze  
With open countenances; broken hearts,

*ECLOGUES*

The haunt, the shrine, and wailing-place of  
    woe,

Be comforted with respite unforeseen,  
And immortality reprieve despair."

The vision beckoned me; the prophecy,  
That smokes and thunders in the blood of  
    youth,

Compelled unending effort, treacherous  
Decoys of doom although these tokens  
    were.

Across the wisdom and the wasted love  
Of some who barred the way my pageant  
    stepped:

"Thus are all triumphs paved," I said; but  
    soon,

Entangled in the tumult of the times,  
Sundered and wrecked, it ceased to pace  
    my thought,



## ECLOGUES

Wherein alone its airy nature strode ;  
While the smooth world, whose lord I  
deemed myself,  
Unsheathed its claws and blindly struck me  
down,  
Mangled my soul for sport, and cast me out  
Alive in Hinnom where human offal rots,  
And fires are heaped against the tainted air.

### *Votary*

Escape !

### *Artist*

I tried, as you will try ; and then,  
Dauntless, I cried, “ At midnight, darkly lit  
By drifts of flame whose ruddy varnish dyes  
The skulls and rounded knuckles light  
selects  
Flickering upon the refuse of despair,  
Here, as it should the costly pageant ends ;

## ECLOGUES

And here with my last strength, since I  
am I,

Here will I paint my scene of life and death :  
Not that I dreamt of when the eager dawn,  
And inexperience, stubborn parasite  
Of youth and manhood, flattered in myself  
And in a well-pleased following, vanities  
Of hope, belief, good-will, the embroidered  
stuff

That masks the cruel eyes of destiny ;  
But a new scene profound and terrible  
As Truth, the implacable antagonist.  
And yet most tender, burning, bitter-sweet  
As are the briny tears and crimson drops  
Of human anguish, inconsolable  
Throughout all time, and wept in every age  
By open wounds and cureless, such as I,  
Whence issues nakedly the heart of life."

## *ECLOGUES*

### *Votary*

What canvas and what colour could you  
find  
To paint in Hinnom so intense a scene ?

### *Artist*

I found and laid no colour. Look about !  
On the flame-roughened darkness whet your  
eyes.  
This needs no deeper hue ; this is the thing :  
Millions of people huddled out of sight,  
The offal of the world.

### *Votary*

I see them now,  
In groups, in multitudes, in hordes, and  
some  
Companionless, ill-lit by tarnished fire

## ECLOGUES

Under the towering darkness ceiled with  
smoke ;

Erect, supine, kneeling or prone, but all  
Sick-hearted and aghast among the bones.

### *Artist*

Here pine the subtle souls that had no root,  
No home below, until disease or shame  
Undid the once-so-certain destiny  
Imagined for the Brocken-sprite of self,  
While earth, which seemed a pleasant inn  
of dreams,  
Unveiled a tedious death-bed and a grave.

### *Votary*

I see! The disillusioned geniuses  
Who fain would make the world sit up, by  
Heaven!  
And dig God in the ribs, and who refuse

## *ECLOGUES*

Their own experience: would-bes, theorists,  
Artistic natures, failed reformers, knaves  
And fools incompetent or overbold,  
Broken evangelists and debauchees,  
Inebriates, criminals, cowards, virtual slaves.

### *Artist*

The world is old; and countless strains of  
    blood  
Are now effete: these loathsome ruined  
    lives  
Are innocent—if life itself be good.  
Inebriate, coward, artist, criminal—  
The nicknames unintelligence expels  
Remorse with when the conscience hints  
    that all  
Are guilty of the misery of one.  
Look at these women: broken chalices,

## *ECLOGUES*

Whose true aroma of the spring is spilt  
In thankless streets and with the sewage  
    blent.

### *Votary*

Harlots, you mean; the scavengers of love,  
Who sweep lust from our thresholds—need-  
    ful brooms

In every age; the very bolts indeed  
That clench and rivet solidarity.

All this is as it has been and shall be:

I see it, note it, and go hence. Farewell.

### *Artist*

Here I await you.

\*           \*           \*           \*

### *Votary*

There is no way out.

## ECLOGUES

### *Artist*

But we are many. What ? So pinched and  
pale  
At once ! Weep, and take courage. This  
is best,  
Because the alternative is not to be.

### *Votary*

But I am nothing yet, have made no mark  
Upon my time ; and, worse than nothing  
now,  
Must wither in a nauseous heap of tares.  
Why am I outcast who so loved the world ?  
How did I reach this place ? Hush ! Let  
me think.  
I said—what did I say and do ? Nothing  
to mourn.  
I trusted life, and life has led me here.

## ECLOGUES

### *Artist*

Where dull endurance only can avail.  
Scarcely a tithe of men escape this fate;  
And not a tithe of those who suffer know  
Their utter misery.

### *Votary*

And must this be  
Now and for ever, and has it always been ?

### *Artist*

Worse now than ever and ever growing  
worse.

Men as they multiply use up mankind  
In greater masses and in subtler ways:  
Ever more opportunity, more power  
For intellect, the proper minister  
Of life, that will usurp authority,  
With lightning at its beck and prisoned  
clouds.



## ECLOGUES

I mean that electricity and steam  
Have set a barbarous fence about the earth,  
And made the oceans and the continents  
Preserved estates of crafty gather-alls;  
Have loaded labour with a shotted chain,  
And raised the primal curse a thousand  
powers.

### *Votary*

What! Are there honest labourers outcast  
here?

Dreamers, pococurantes, wanton bloods  
In plenty and to spare; but surely work  
Attains another goal than Hinnom!

### *Artist*

Look!  
Seared by the sun and carved by cold or  
blanched

## ECLOGUES

In darkness; gnarled and twisted all awry  
By rotting fogs; lamed, limb-lopped, can-  
kered, burst,  
The outworn workers!

### *Votary*

I take courage then!  
Since workers here abound it must be right  
That men should end in Hinnom.

### *Artist*

Right! How right?  
The fable of the world till now records  
Only the waste of life: the conquerors,  
Tyrants and oligarchs, and men of ease,  
Among the myriad nations, peoples, tribes,  
Need not be thought of: earth's inhab-  
itants,  
Man, ape, dinornis for a moment breathe,

## ECLOGUES

In misery die, and to oblivion  
Are dedicated all. Consider still  
The circumstance that most appeals to men :  
Eternal siege and ravage of the source  
Of being, of beauty, and of all delight,  
The hell of whoredom. God! The hourly  
waste  
Of women in the world since time began !

*Votary*

I think of it.

*Artist*

And of the waste of men  
In war—pitiful soldiers, battle-harlots.

*Votary*

That also I consider.

*Artist*

Weaklings, fools  
In millions who must end disastrously ;

## *ECLOGUES*

The willing hands and hearts, in millions  
too,  
Paid with perdition for a life of toil;  
The blood of women, a constant sacrifice,  
Staining the streets and every altar-step;  
The blood of men poured out in endless  
wars;  
No hope, no help; the task, the stripes, the  
woe  
Augmenting with the ages. Right, you  
say!

### *Votary*

Do you remember how the moon appears  
Illumining the night ?

### *Artist*

What has the moon  
To do with Hinnom ?

## *ECLOGUES*

### *Votary*

Call the moon to mind.  
Can you ? Or have you quite forgotten all  
The magic of her beams ?

### *Artist*

Oh no ! The moon  
Is the last memory of ample thought,  
Of joy and loveliness that one forgets  
In this abode. Since first the tide of life  
Began to ebb and flow in human veins,  
The targe of lovers' looks, their brimming  
fount  
Of dreams and chalice of their sighs ; with  
peace  
And deathless legend clad and crowned, the  
moon !

## *ECLOGUES*

### *Votary*

But I adore it with a newer love,  
Because it is the offal of the globe.  
When from the central nebula our orb,  
Outflung, set forth upon its way through  
    space,  
Still towards its origin compelled to lean  
And grope in molten tides, a belt of fire,  
Home-sick, burst off at last, and towards  
    the sun  
Whirling, far short of its ambition fell,  
Insphered a little distance from the earth  
There to bethink itself and wax and wane,  
The moon!

### *Artist*

I see! I know! You mean that you  
And I, and foiled ambitions every one  
In every age; the outworn labourers,

## ECLOGUES

Pearls of the sewer, idlers, armies, scroyles,  
The offal of the world, will somehow be—  
Are now a lamp by night, although we  
deem

Ourselves disgraced, forlorn; even as the  
moon,

The scum and slag of earth, that, if it feels,  
Feels only sterile pain, gladdens the moun-  
tains

And the spacious sea.

### *Votary*

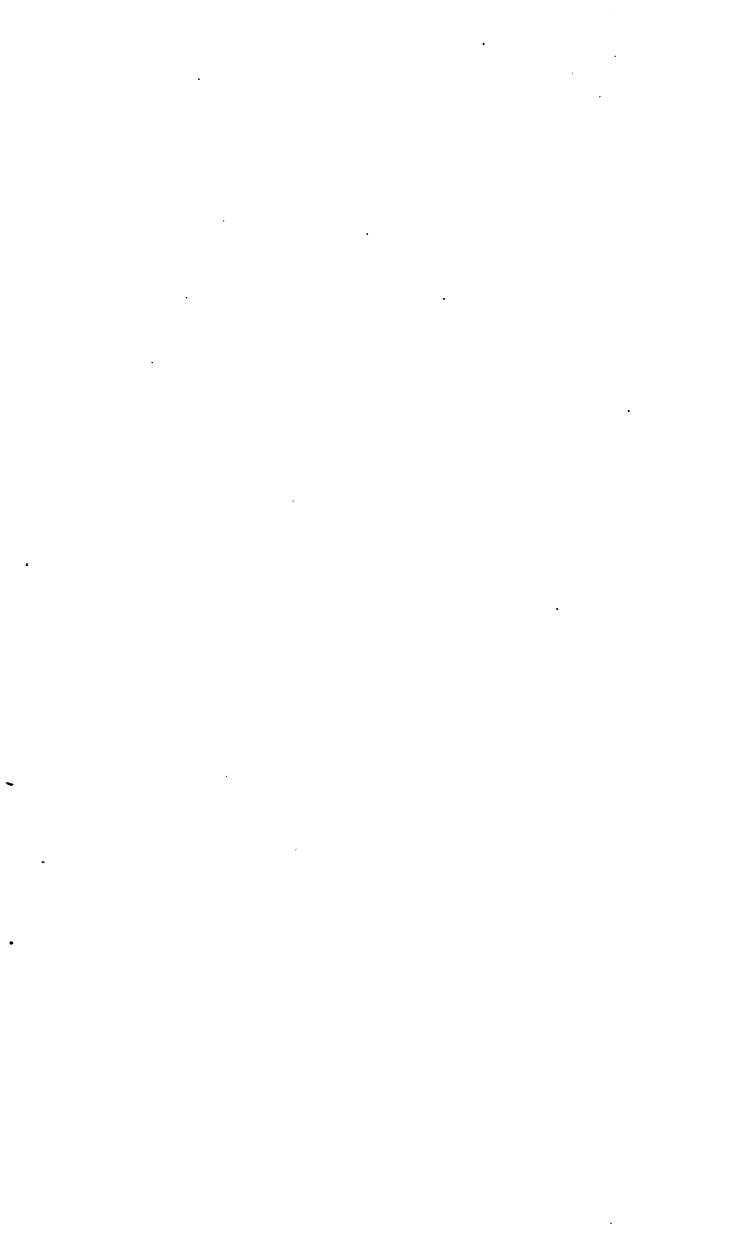
I mean it. And I mean  
That the deep thoughts of immortality  
And of our alienage, inventing gods  
And paradise and wonders manifold,  
Are rooted in the centre. We are fire,  
Cut off and cooled a while; and shall return,

*ECLOGUES*

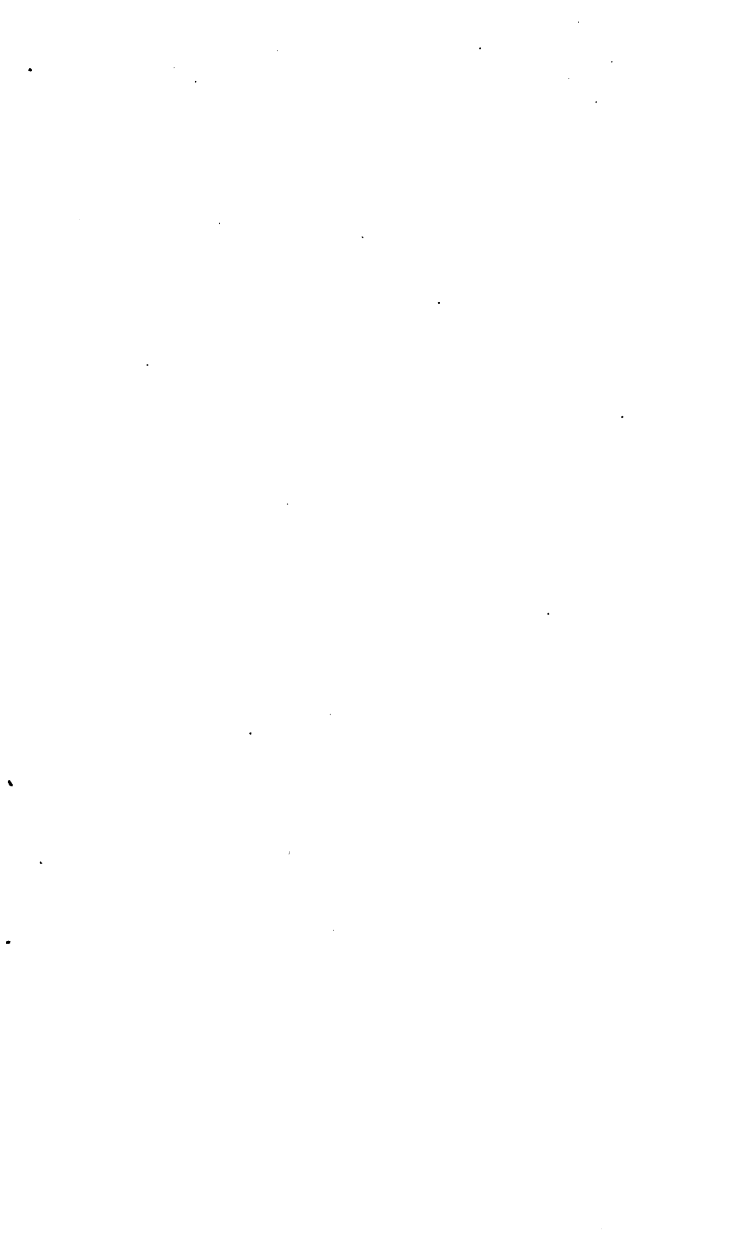
The earth and all thereon that live and die,  
To be again candescent in the sun,  
Or in the sun's intenser, purer source.  
What matters Hinnom for an hour or two ?  
Arise and ~~let~~ us sing; and, singing, build  
A tabernacle even with these ghastly bones.



x



X









7.

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

DEC 6 '74 H  
3 740044  
JAN '74 H



23497.58.8

The last ballad,  
Widener Library

001426782



3 2044 086 859 824